

## Introduction to Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) ~ Part 2

In my last post, we began to look at some background material on the book of **Yesha'yahu**. In this post, we continue to look at the man, the kings that were ruling at the time, and his disclosure of the coming of the **Messiah**.

### The Man

The name **Yesha'yahu** means "*salvation of the Lord*," and salvation (deliverance) is the key theme of his book. He wrote concerning five different acts of deliverance that God would perform:

- the deliverance of **Y'hudah** [Judah] from **Ashur** [Assyria] invasion (chaps. 36-37);
- the deliverance of the nation from **Babylonian** captivity (chap. 40);
- the future deliverance of the Jews from worldwide dispersion among the Gentiles (chaps. 11-12);
- the deliverance of lost sinners from judgment (chap. 53); and,
- the final deliverance of creation from the bondage of sin when the kingdom is established (chaps. 60; 66:17ff).

**Yesha'yahu** was married, and his wife was called "*the prophetess*" (8:3 NASB), either because she was married to a prophet or because she shared the prophetic gift. He fathered two sons whose names have prophetic significance: **Sh'ar Yashuv** [Shear-jashub] ("*a remnant shall return*," 7:3) and **Maher Shalal Hash Baz** ("*the spoil hurries, the prey speeds along*," 8:1-3). The two names speak of the nation's judgment and restoration, two important themes in **Yesha'yahu's** prophecy.

**Yesha'yahu** was called to his ministry *in the year that King 'Uziyahu* [Uzziah] *died* (6:1), which was 739 BCE. Tradition says that **M'nasheh** [Manasseh], King **Y'chizkiyahu's** [Hezekiah] successor, killed **Yesha'yahu** by having him sawn in half (Messianic Jews 11:37), but there is no record of this in Scripture.

What kind of man was **Yesha'yahu** the prophet? As you read his prophecy, you will discover that he was a man in touch with God. He saw God's Son and God's glory (chap. 6; John 12:41), he heard God's message, and he sought to bring the nation back to God before it was too late.

**Yesha'yahu** was a man who loved his nation. The phrase "my people" is used at least twenty-six times in his book. He was a patriot with a true love for his country, pleading with **Y'hudah** to return to God and warning kings when their foreign policy was contrary to God's will. **Yesha'yahu** was certainly a courageous man. Unafraid to denounce kings and priests, and unwavering when public opinion went against him, he boldly declared the Word of God. He was a man skilled in communicating God's truth. Not content with merely declaring facts, **Yesha'yahu** clothed those facts in striking language that would catch the attention of a people blind and deaf to spiritual truth (6:9-10).

### The Kings of Y'hudah

The nation had divided after the death of **Shlomo** [Solomon] (1 Kings 12), but the priesthood and the **Davidic** throne belonged to **Y'hudah**. The ten northern tribes formed the kingdom of **Isra'el (Efrayim)**, with **Shomron** as its capital city, and **Binyamin** and **Y'hudah** united to form the kingdom of **Y'hudah**, with **Yerushalayim** [Jerusalem] as its capital city. Though **Yesha'yahu** predicted the fall of **Isra'el** to **Ashur** (chap. 28), which occurred in 722 BCE, his major focus was on **Y'hudah** and **Yerushalayim** (1:1).

**'Uziyahu** [Uzziah] is also called **'Azaryah**. At the age of sixteen, he became co-regent with his father, **Amatzyahu**, and was on the throne for fifty-two years (792-740). When his father was assassinated in 767, **'Uziyahu** became the sole ruler and brought the nation to its greatest days since **David** and **Shlomo** (2 Kings 14:17-22; 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 26:1-15). He tried to intrude into the priest's ministry in the temple, and God

judged him by smiting him with **tzara'at**. It was in the year that King **'Uziyahu** died that **Yesha'yahu** was called to minister.

**Yotam** [Jotham] was co-regent after his father became infected with **tzara'at** [leprosy], and his record as a king was a good one (2 Kings 15:32-38; 2 Chronicles 27). He reigned for twenty years, and it was during his time that the **Ashurean** Empire began to emerge as a new and threatening power. During the last twelve years of **Yotam's** reign, his son **Achaz** served as co-regent, but **Achaz** was not one of **Y'hudah's** good kings.

**Achaz** [Ahaz] forged political alliances that eventually brought **Y'hudah** into bondage to **Ashur** (2 Kings 16; 2 Chron. 28). Egypt repeatedly threatened **Y'hudah** from the south and by **Aram** and **Isra'el** from the north, and **Achaz** depended on an alliance with **Ashur** to protect himself. **Yesha'yahu** warned **Achaz** that his alliances with godless Gentiles would not work, and he encouraged the king to put his trust in the Lord (Isaiah 7).

**Y'chizkiyahu** [Hezekiah] reigned forty-two years and was one of **Y'hudah's** greatest kings (2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chron. 29-32). He not only strengthened the city of **Yerushalayim** and the nation of **Y'hudah** but led the people back to the Lord. He built the famous water system that still exists in **Yerushalayim**.

The ministry of **Yesha'yahu** spans over fifty years, from 739 to 686 BCE and it probably extended into the early years of King **M'nasheh's** reign. It was a difficult time of international upheaval when first one power and then another threatened **Y'hudah**. But the greatest dangers were not outside the nation: they were within. In spite of the godly leadership of King **Y'chizkiyahu**, **Y'hudah** had no more godly kings. One by one, **Y'chizkiyahu's** successors led the nation into political and spiritual decay, ending in captivity in Babylon.

### The Messiah

**Yesha'yahu** is much more than a prophet. He is an evangelist who presents **Yeshua the Messiah** and the Good News of the Gospel. **Yesha'yahu's** "*Servant Song*" about Yeshua (Isaiah 52:13-53:12) is quoted or alluded to nearly forty times in the **Brit Hadashah**.

The prophet wrote about the birth of **Yeshua** (7:14; 9:6; Matt. 1:18-25); the ministry of **Yochanan the Immerser** (Isaiah 40:1-6; Matt. 3:1ff); **Yeshua's** anointing by the Spirit (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:17-19); the nation's rejection of their **Messiah** (Isaiah 6:9-11; John 12:38ff); **Yeshua**, the *stone to stumble over* (Isaiah 8:14; 28:16; Romans 9:32-33; 10:11; 1 Peter 2:6); **Yeshua's** ministry to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:6; Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47); the **Messiah's** suffering and death (Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Acts 3:13; 8:32-33; 1 Peter 2:21-25); His resurrection (Isaiah 55:3; Acts 13:34); and His return to reign as King (Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1ff; 59:20-21; 63:1-3; Rom. 11:26-27; Rev. 19:13-15). There are many other references in **Yesha'yahu** to the **Messiah**, and we will notice them as we study this book.

It is this emphasis on redemption that gives **Yesha'yahu** a message for the whole world. While it is true he ministered to the little nation of **Y'hudah** and wrote about nations and empires that for the most part are no longer on the world scene; his focus was on God's plan of salvation for the whole world. **Yesha'yahu** saw the greatness of God and the vastness of His plan of salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike. **Yesha'yahu** was a patriot but not a bigot; he saw beyond his nation to the gracious work God would do among the Gentile nations of the world.

As you study **Yesha'yahu** and discover God's prophetic plan for the nations of the world, don't miss his emphasis on the personal message of God's forgiveness. "*Come now,*" says **Adonai**, "*let's talk this over together. Even if your sins are like scarlet, they will be white as snow; even if they are red as crimson, they will be like wool.*" ~ Isaiah 1:18 (CJB)

In my next post, I will begin an in-depth, verse-by-verse study of one of my favorite prophets.